**Groundcovers for a Drought Tolerant Landscape**

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We have been blessed with some rain and cool weather but it still looks likely that we are going to reach Stage 3 drought restrictions this summer. A low water-need landscape looks more and more desirable.

A key feature of a low water-use landscape is to replace most or all of the grass with drought-tolerant groundcovers. There are many to choose from. Some even have blooms.

In addition to requiring less water than lawn grass, groundcovers require less maintenance. They grow to a certain height and stay there. The recommended groundcovers are also less likely to require pesticide sprays or fertilizer.

Asiatic jasmine is probably the favorite groundcover. It can be grown in shade or sun and appears on some deer-proof lists. Asiatic jasmine is evergreen with shiny tear-drop shaped leaves. It can be grown as rolling hills of plants 18 inches tall or cut with square edges and a surface as low as 4 inches tall. Most folks chose an intermediate height.

Another evergreen groundcover is dwarf Ruellia. It grows to 12 inches tall in sun or shade and has an attractive tubular bloom in blue, pink or white. It has long strap like leaves on a central stalk. Deer do not relish dwarf Ruellia but will eat it during a drought.

For full shade, monkey grass and liriope are good choices. They look like grass but do not need to be mowed. Monkey grass grows to about 5 inches tall. There are several versions of Liriope. Giant liriope can be 18 inches tall. Using liriope and monkey grass in a layered arrangement at different heights is especially attractive.

Rosemary is an evergreen plant that makes a deer-proof groundcover in full sun. The upright version grows to 2 feet tall and prostrate rosemary grows to about 1 foot tall. Prostrate rosemary is especially attractive to use on the edge of retaining walls or on slopes. Rosemary has blue flowers in early spring.

Another evergreen groundcover for full sun that looks good on retaining walls or slopes is spreading juniper. There are a number of different varieties so you can select the foliage shade and leaf structure you like best.

One of my favorite groundcovers for full sun is cemetery iris. Iris is desirable because of their drought tolerance, pest resistance and, of course, spring blooms but they also have a different growing configuration than most other groundcovers. The sword-like foliage grows upright to 12 to 24 inches tall depending on the soil fertility. Iris is also deer-proof.

Daylilies also make a good tall groundcover with showy blooms. The foliage is upright with a weeping orientation. Unfortunately daylilies are one of the favorite deer foods.

Some groundcovers are fast to fill in and others are slow, taking more than one growing season to fill the allotted space.

One of the best strategies for replacing lawn grass with an easy-to-care for groundcover is to kill the grass with Round-up and then plant the groundcovers right into the killed sod.